DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 624 PS 011 108

AUTHOR	Foster, Cheryl
TITLE	Establishing Relationships with Parents to Facilitate Communication: Arizona HSST/CDA Competency Based Training Module #10.
INSTITUTION	Pinal County Community Coll. District, Coolidge, Ariz. Arizona/Nevada Child Development Associates.
SPONS AGENCY	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	78
CONTRACT	190-78-0003
NOTE	24p.; For other modules in this series, see PS 011 100-128
AVAILABLE FROM	Arizona/Nevada CDA, P.O. Box 337, Sacaton, AZ 85247 ($0.33 per module)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Care Workers; Early Childhood Education; Parent Attitudes; Parent Participation; *Parent School Relationship; Parent Teacher Conferences; *Parent Teacher Cooperation; *Performance Based Teacher Education; Postsecondary Education; *Preschool Teachers; *Training
IDENTIFIERS	*CDA; Child Development Associate

ABSTRACT

This Child Development Associate (CDA) training module is designed to help the CDA intern establish a positive type of relationship with parents which will lead to effective communication and cooperation between home and school. Objectives are presented along with suggested activities for achieving each objective and an assessment checklist. Also provided is a study guide emphasizing the importance of parent teacher cooperation, parent attitudes about their children being in school, parent teacher conferences, and parent participation in classroom activities. Resources for further study and supplemental materials such as an initial parent interview form for new enrollees, a parent contact record, and a parent contact chart are also included. (Author/MP)

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Competency Based Training Module #10

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

by

Cheryl Foster

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NOTE TO THE INTERN:

This CDA training module has been prepared as a guide for you and your CDA Advisor to help you to develop certain practical skills necessary for your work in an early childhood center. Although it contains many useful ideas, it is not intended to be a self-study program. Many decisions about your training experiences are left up to you and your CDA Advisor. The activities given in this module are "suggested" activities, and should be used if they are appropriate to your learning needs. You or your Advisor may come up with other activities more appropriate for your particular situation, children, or background of experience and training.

Your Advisor will evaluate your performance in each of the objectives. S/he may do so right away on the basis of skills you already have, or s/he may evaluate you after you have done some learning activities, or both. If you think you already have the skills required by some of the objectives, you should ask to be evaluated right away. You may not have to do any activities for some of the objectives. You do, however, have to demonstrate the required skills for your advisor; you cannot just tell s/him that you have the skills. If your advisor has already observed some of the skills before you entered this module, s/he may check you off on those skills without further observation.

When your Advisor has evaluated your performance in an objective area as satisfactory, s/he will initial and date that objective as completed in your copy of this module. When all of the objectives have been initialled, you have completed the requirements of this module and have earned credit. Keep this module as your permanent record of completion, and as a reference to use in your classroom.

As you can see, how fast you are able to complete this module depends on a lot of things: how much time and effort you can put into it; how much help your Advisor can give you; how much experience and training you have already had.

The Arizona/Nevada HSST/CDA Program hopes that you find your participation in CDA a valuable and practical training experience. We would appreciate any suggestions you may have for improvements in the training program and in this module.

ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

CDA TRAINING MODULE #10

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This Module relates to the following CDA Functional Areas:

8 - Self Concept

12 - Home Center

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ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

INTRODUCTION

One of the main goals of early childhood education is to help a child toward a positive idea of himself as a person. This is best accomplished when teachers and parents work together as partners to help each child grow emotionally, socially, intellectually, and physically. There is a great need for close, understanding relationships between teachers and parents during these first years that a child begins spending time away from home and in a group of other children.

The job of the early childhood center and its staff is to establish a positive type of relationship with parents so that parents will feel free to discuss various facets of their children's lives with the teachers. If parents feel reluctant to be open and honest with a child's teacher, a gap in the child's early education can result. The Intern needs to keep in mind that the things they say and do can lead away from or closer to positive relationships with parents. The Intern should also realize that good relationships with parents lead to better relationships with the children.

The purpose of this module is to assist the Intern in acquiring the background and know-how involved in establishing the kind of relationships with parents which will lead to effective communication and cooperation between home and school.

OBJECTIVES, ACTIVITIES, ASSESSMENT

CDA Intern's Name_____

Date of Entry_____Date of Completion_____

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
1. The Intern will initiate a partnership relationship with parents by seeking information about the child from his parents and by getting to know the parents themselves. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	1. Read Section I of the Study Guide. a. Discuss ways in which both parents and and teachers contribute to the partner relationship. b. Decide what information is important for you to seek from parents as you are learning about the children in your classroom. c. Interview parents using a form such as the one in the supplement or a form you have developed to record the information. d. Gather pertinent information about the parents (where they live, where they work, number of children, special skills and interests, etc.). e. Study the information you have gathered and file it in the child's individual folder for later reference.
2. The Intern will discuss the various feelings that parents have toward their child being in preschool. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	2. Read Section II of the Study Guide. a. Relate the key ideas in the Study Guide to parents of children in your classroom. Can you cite examples of many types of feelings the parents have about their children? b. Refer to pages 369-375 of Resources for Further Study - #3. Discuss these ideas with your Advisor. c. Discuss some specific ways you can deal with the various feelings parents have about their child being in your care.
3. The Intern will discuss the key feelings that need to be promoted to foster positive relationships with parents. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	3. Read Section III of the Study Guide. a. Cite specific examples of how you can promote each of the concepts listed in the Study Guide. b. Evaluate your past performance in how you foster these positive feelings and ways in which you would like to improve.

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
4. The Intern will discuss the various levels at which parents and teachers interact. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	4. Read Section IV of the Study Guide. a. Give specific examples of how you interact with parents on all three of the levels mentioned in the Study Guide. b. Evaluate your performance with your Advisor. Which level typifies most of your interaction with parents? Which level is most complex? How can you improve your skills?
5. The Intern will know the various types of contact with parents, the strengths and limitations of each, and use the kinds of contacts which are practical and beneficial for s/him. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	5. Read Section V of the Study Guide. a. List the opportunities for contact with parents and the strengths and limitations of each. b. Evaluate which types of contact you have used most often, which types are feasible in your situation, and which ones you haven't used that you would like to try. c. Use a variety of techniques (conversations with parents as they come and go with their child, telephone calls, home visits, notes, newsletters, parent visits in classroom, group meetings, and social events) to maintain contact with parents of all of the children in the center. d. Visit with another teacher in another center and identify one technique that s/he is using that could work for you. e. Read one of the five articles in Resources for Further Study - #1 (choose from pages 196-223) and select one technique that could improve your contact with parents.
6. The Intern will conduct planned conferences with the parents of each child in the classroom. ASSESSMENT _____ date/initial	6. Read Section VI of the Study Guide. a. Prepare for conferences by having all relevant information in the child's individual folder. Study your observations of the child, the developmental checklist you have used with the child (see Module #9), and have samples of the child's work in his folder.

OBJECTIVES	SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
	b. Schedule parent conferences at a time and place convenient for the parents and you.
	c. Evaluate the conferences you have conducted according to strengths and limitations. How will you try to improve future parent-teacher conferences?
7. The Intern will encourage parent involvement in the classroom program activities.	7. Read Section VII of the Study Guide.
	a. Schedule parent help in the classroom.
ASSESSMENT	b. Schedule a time for a parent to share a special talent or skill.
_____ date/initial	c. Refer to Module #11 - Section VII of the Study Guide.
8. The Intern will establish a systematic and on-going method for documenting family contacts.	8. Read Section VIII of the Study Guide.
	a. Use the Parent Contact Record (for individual records) and the Parent Contact Chart (for classroom record) found in the Supplement.
ASSESSMENT	
_____ date/initial	b. Evaluate the documentation system you are using and how it is working for you. How can you improve your recordkeeping system?
9. The Intern will evaluate the effect of the parent-teacher relationships s/he has established with s/his program.	9. Read Section IX of the Study Guide.
	a. Discuss with your Advisor your observations of the positive effects of the type of relationships you have promoted in your classroom program.
ASSESSMENT	
_____ date/initial	b. Discuss any negative effects of the way you are interacting with parents and ways you can seek to improve that interaction.
10. The Intern will make an implementation plan, stating how the skills and information gained through completing this module will be incorporated into s/his center program.	10. Review with your Advisor the new skills you have gained in establishing relationships with parents. Make an implementation plan, answering these questions:
	a. In which areas do you need to improve your skills?
ASSESSMENT	b. What specific steps can you take to realize those improvements?
_____ date/initial	

OBJECTIVES

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

c. When do you want to review your implementation progress with your Advisor?

Insert your implementation plan into your CDA Portfolio and refer to it periodically to check your own progress.

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ESTABLISHING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS TO FACILITATE COMMUNICATION

STUDY GUIDE

I. Teachers and parents need to depend on each other and develop a partnership which has the child's well being as the focal point of their cooperative efforts.

A. Teachers need to learn from the parents, especially at the point where the teacher is just getting to know the child.

1. What is the child like at home?

2. What kinds of experiences has he had?

3. How does he respond at home?

4. Does the child have any special health needs?

B. Parents need to learn from the teacher and benefit from the teacher's experience and training in working with groups of young children.

1. What is the child like at school?

2. What is the preschool experience offering him?

3. How can they give him the appropriate kind of help and support at home?

C. The initial parent interview is an important tool in initiating the partnership relationship. (The Supplement provides one possible form - INITIAL PARENT INTERVIEW FORM - to use at the time of this interview.)

1. It should be completed at the time of the enrollment contact or when the child begins to attend the center.

2. It initiates the parent-teacher contact with a clear focus on the child.

3. It provides the teaching staff with important developmental information.

4. It demonstrates to the parent that s/his observations of and insights into s/his child's development are of value to the teacher.

II. Parents have mixed feelings about their child being in his first school situation.

A. The parents know that now the child will become more independent and have some experiences that they won't share and find some new satisfying relationships.

1. The parents may find it difficult to let the teacher share responsibility for the child.

2. Some parents feel a need to have some time away from their small children but feel guilty about that need.

B. On the other hand, most parents enjoy watching their child have a growth spurt and having a good time doing new things.

C. Parents are interested in what happens to their child in his first school experience.

D. Teachers need to be aware of the feelings of parents and the implications of these feelings for s/his role of working with a child.

1. Different types of parents will react very differently as they bring their children to preschool.

2. If a child has difficulty in entering preschool, it might be an indication of the difficulty the parent has in leaving s/his child in that situation.

3. The parent-child relationship is loaded with very strong emotional feelings, and a teacher must be able to recognize and understand a parent's attitude toward a situation.

4. A better relationship is made possible when a teacher is careful in matters involving health as this is an area of concern to most parents.

5. Parents sometimes react defensively in the school situation and will act as if a teacher has criticized them even when this is not the case.

6. A teacher can cope best with some of these ambivalent feelings and reactions of parents when s/he feels quite sure of s/himself and comfortable with the things that s/he is doing in the classroom.

III. Keeping in mind some key concepts can help pave the way for positive relationships with parents.

A. <u>A common bond: The child's welfare</u>.

Once it has been established that both parties have the child's interest at heart, the partnership relationship can grow and develop.

B. <u>Acceptance</u>.

Help the parent feel accepted in the situation of being a parent in the preschool.

C. <u>Respect</u>.

Respect the strong emotional relationship between a parent and child.

D. <u>Understanding</u>

Good parent-teacher relations are based on understanding on the part of <u>each</u> as to how a situation looks to the <u>other</u>.

E. Reassurance

We can do much to comfort and support parents when we offer them an accepting attitude, an open ear, and a warm heart. They need to be reminded that no one person has all the answers when it comes to raising children.

F. Cooperation

When the parents feel that their child is accepted and that they, as parents, are accepted, they will feel freer to work with the teacher on the child's behalf and truly become a part of the child's school career.

G. Learning and Changing

Working together with parents can be satisfying and rewarding as we watch them learn and change and as we find ourselves learning and changing.

IV. Parents and teachers relate to each other on different levels, all of which will probably be used during a year's time.

A. The simplest one is characterized by the teacher letting the parents know what is happening at school. (Examples: "This is a picture Ramona painted today." or "Victor had fun playing with the magnets today.")

B. Another level sees the teacher acting as an information provider, interpreting a child's behavior to the parents on the basis of s/his broad experience with other children. (Example: Parents will be less anxious about certain undesirable behavior if they realize that this is typical of many four-year-olds.)

C. Another level of relating to parents is a guidance level in which the teacher helps the parents discover what may be causing various problems and how they might best cope with them.

V. It is important to maintain contact with the parents of each child in the classroom and to share necessary information. There are many possible opportunities for contact between parents and teachers, and each type of contact has its strengths and limitations.

A. Informal conversations and countless casual meetings as parents come and go with their children:

1. These are short but significant because of the information exchanged and the friendly climate that is created.

2. The informality of these encounters makes them less threatening than many other contacts.

3. In repeated, consistent contact the parents and teachers see each other in a variety of situations and moods.

4. The teacher needs to free s/himself the first and last 15 minutes of each day for these casual meetings with parents. This availability can help foster relationships of friendliness and trust.

B. Telephone calls to parents:

1. The telephone can be an ice breaker and open a channel of communication as it is easier for some people to talk over the phone than in person.

2. A phone call is a simple way to indicate interest and concern. (For example, if a child has been absent due to illness.)

3. In certain cases a phone call is less threatening to parents than a home visit.

4. Phone calls can provide a link between person to person contacts when children are bused to school.

C. Home visits:

1. A home visit demonstrates to the parent that the teacher is interested in their child.

2. A teacher can receive first-hand information about the child's physical environment. This is important when talking to the parents about activities that they can provide for the child at home.

3. Home visits should be strongly considered when children ride the bus to school.

D. Notes:

1. Notes are valuable as written reminders to parents, as a way to share something positive or special about the child's day, or as a way to bring a problem to the parent's attention.

2. Notes can be one way to keep in touch with parents when children are bused to school.

3. Notes to parents are an important means of contact when phone calls or face-to-face meetings are not feasible.

E. Newsletters:

1. The staff at the center can plan to regularly publish a newsletter which informs parents of activities and events at the center.

2. Another possibility concerning newsletters is for the staff to include an article in a community newsletter or newspaper.

F. Parent visits in the classroom:

1. Parents should be extended an invitation to come in and visit the classroom. Parents can eat a snack or have lunch with their child, can observe the usual, everyday activities, or can come in to observe some special activity the teacher has planned.

2. The value of such visits is increased when the teacher has time to interpret what is going on and explain the purposes of the activities.

3. Visits to the classroom offer parents the chance to observe and learn more about child growth and development and about ways of guiding children's growth.

G. Group meetings:

1. These meetings offer opportunities for bringing up questions, talking over subjects of general interest, sharing information about the classroom activities, obtaining parental input concerning the classroom curriculum, planning for up-coming events, showing appropriate films or slides, hearing a guest speaker, etc.

2. Open-house events, social events such as a Mother's Day Luncheon or an end-of-the-year dinner, and fund raising activities such as food sales are other types of group meetings which can have a place in the classroom program.

VI. Planned conferences with the parents of each child are important and should be conducted as needed (two times a year is often considered appropriate).

A. Conferences with parents offer a chance for uninterrupted meetings centering on the individual child's progress.

B. These meetings are more time consuming than group meetings but are more important since they are more personal in nature.

C. These conferences can be scheduled to take place at the center or in the child's home at the time of a home visit.

D. Certain "DO'S" can help a teacher make the best of conference time and further good relationships.

1. DO center the conference on the child and what is appropriately involved, such as the child's growth and development, the school program and the child's behavior at school.

2. DO prepare for the conference by reviewing information about the child and his background before the parents arrive.

3. DO develop your own style of handling conferences.

4. DO be direct, positive, and informative.

5. DO stress the happy and the positive; share the good and amusing qualities of the child.

6. DO be aware of and reflect appreciation of the positive resources families have in handling problems.

7. DO encourage the parent to talk.

8. DO be alert to not only what the parent is saying but also to the meaning and feelings accompanying the words.

9. DO reflect feelings and attitudes with appropriate remarks.

10. DO tell the parents that you would like to get to know the child better.

11. DO get helpful information such as whether or not the child talks about school at home, how he best likes to spend his time at home, and other indications of the child's life at home.

12. DO approach possible weaknesses by asking a question such as "Is there any special way you'd like us to try to help him?"

13. DO suggest help from other sources if a problem is a complex one.

E. Certain "DON'TS" can keep a conference from being a hindrance to better relationships.

1. DON'T talk too much (give parents plenty of opportunities to participate).

2. DON'T spend too much time on any one issue.

3. DON'T probe into intimate family relations.

4. DON'T give advice when it is not requested.

5. DON'T be afraid to say "I don't know" when you honestly don't.

6. DON'T try to accomplish too much at a single conference.

7. DON'T expect to solve all of the problems of parents (some situations are not within your domain).

F. Report progress to parents using a written form which includes several areas of development.

1. The parents should receive information about their child's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development.

2. Refer to Module #9 for a Preschool Profile, one possibility for a suitable tool which can be used with parents to show where their child is on the developmental ladder.

VII. Schedule parent help and participation whenever possible and appropriate.

A. Parents often like to help in the classroom; this can relieve the teacher of some of s/his work load and lower the student-teacher ratio.

B. Children gain a great deal of satisfaction from seeing one of their parents helping in the classroom.

C. Parents have special skills and talents which they can share and which can greatly enrich the center program.

D. Invite parents to accompany the children on field trips.

E. Include fathers in the program as much as possible by arranging a time for them to see their child's classroom in action or to help out in the work of the center (such as help with making and/or maintaining classroom equipment).

VIII. The classroom teacher is responsible for establishing a systematic method of documenting parent contacts.

A. All contacts, no matter when or where they occur, should be noted in your records if significant information was shared.

B A parent contact record (see sample in the Supplement) can be used to record important information shared between staff and parent.

1. It should be kept in the child's folder.

2. It can be used in preparation for conferences with parents to ensure that important information is not omitted at the time of the conference. The teacher can fill out the "Information shared with parent" section prior to meeting with the parent and these items can be checked off as they are discussed with the parent.

C. A parent contact chart (see sample in the Supplement) can be used as a running record of parent contacts.

1. This form can help ensure that all parents are contacted regularly.

2. The chart can be posted at a convenient location in the classroom to facilitate its use as a recordkeeping tool.

IX. Close parent-teacher relationships have positive effects for parents, teachers, and children.

A. Teachers will note that a parent becomes an ally in keeping the child more interested and involved in school.

B. Teachers are likely to find all of the positive reactions personally rewarding.

C. Close relationships make confrontations over more serious matters much easier.

D. Most importantly, positive interaction between parents and teachers can help a child develop positive feelings toward himself and the school.

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. Baker, Katherine Read. IDEAS THAT WORK WITH YOUNG CHILDREN. Washington, D.C., National Association for Education of Young Children, 1972, pp. 196-223.

2. Pitcher, Evelyn and others. HELPING YOUNG CHILDREN LEARN. Columbus, Charles Merrill Publishing Co., 1974, pp. 9-13.

3. Read, Katherine H. THE NURSERY SCHOOL: A HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS LABORATORY. Philadelphia, W.B. Saunders Co., 1971, pp. 38-40.

4. THE CDA PROGRAM: A GUIDE FOR TRAINING. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Office of Child Development, 1973, p. 15.

SUPPLEMENT

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INITIAL PARENT INTERVIEW FORM FOR NEW ENROLLEES

1. Child's name:_____, Birthdate:_____, Age:_____

   Language spoken at home:_____, Does the child regularly

   hear any other language?___ What Language?_____

2. Have you talked with your child about him/her attending our Head Start Center?_____

   Does he seem eager to start?_____, Comments:_____

   _____

3. Does your child seem reluctant or object to being left in the care of others?_____

   Comment:_____

   _____

4. Does your child express fear of:

People?	____	Trains?	____
Darkness?	____	Loud noises?	____
Dogs?	____	Other?	_____

5. Does your child enjoy playing with other children? Yes ___ No___

   with children his/her own age? ___ ___

   with younger children? ___ ___

   with older children? ___ ___

6. How does child react in a new situation?

Afraid?	____	Comment:_____
Cries?	____	
Misbehaves?	____	_____
Normal?	____	

7. Child's sleeping habits:

	As infant	Presently
(a) Thumbsucking	_____	_____
(b) Rocking	_____	_____
(c) Special toy in bed	_____	_____
(d) Blanket	_____	_____
(e) Lights off	_____	_____

8. Does your child have angry outburts, temper tantrums, or sullen spells?_____

   If yes, under what circumstances do they occur?_____

   _____

9. What methods do you use in disciplining your child?_____

   _____

   If it occurs in the center what do you suggest the center staff do?_____

   _____

10. Can your child control his/her bladder?_____, Currently, does he/she wet self?_____

Comment:_____

_____

11. Can your child control his/her bowel movements?_____, Currently, does he/she soil self?_____, Comment:_____

_____

(Explain to parents that if child wets or soils him/her self, parents will need to provide extra pair of clothing.)

12. Does your child have strong likes and dislikes for food?_____, If yes, describe:

_____

_____

13. Any liquids? (juice, milk, etc.)_____, Explain:_____

_____

14. Is child allergic to or become ill when eating certain foods or certain ingredients in foods?_____ Explain:_____

_____

15.

	YES	NO	SOME-TIMES	COMMENTS
Can Child signal needs? (Bathroom, water, food, etc.)	___	___	___	_____
Does child feed him/her self?	___	___	___	_____
Can child hold a glass?	___	___	___	_____
Can child dress him/her self? Alone?	___	___	___	_____
With Help?	___	___	___	_____
Does child talk?	___	___	___	_____
Is child's speech clear?	___	___	___	_____
Does child enjoy watching television?	___	___	___	_____
Can child recognize his/her name? (written)	___	___	___	_____
Can child scribble?	___	___	___	_____
Can child draw?	___	___	___	_____
Can child paint?	___	___	___	_____
Can child recognize colors?	___	___	___	_____
Can child count?	___	___	___	_____

16. Does your child have any speech problems? (stuttering, voice problems, no speech, etc.)

_____

17. Does child applying for the program have any of the following conditions?

	Yes	No
Deafness/Hard of hearing?	_____	_____
Crippled?	_____	_____
Blindness?	_____	_____
Multiple handicapped?	_____	_____
Speech Impairment?	_____	_____
Epilepsy?	_____	_____

Other:_____, Explain:_____

_____

If yes for any of the above conditions, has child been screened by a specialist or a physician?_____

Name of specialist/physician:_____

Where was child examined?_____

18. Is child under medical care for any reason?_____, If yes, give reason:_____

_____

19. Is child allergic to any medicine?_____, If yes, what?_____

20. Does child often have:

colds	___	asthma	___
earache	___	nose bleeding	___
upset stomach	___	heart trouble	___
fever	___	nightmares	___
constipation	___	others:	_____
hay fever	___		
diarrhea	___		_____

If yes to any of the above, under what circumstances do they occur?_____

_____

21. Will child ride the bus?_____, If no, what will the arrangement be for arrival and pick-up of child? Arrival Time:_____ by whom:_____

Pick-up Time:_____ by whom:_____

Comments:_____

22. In case of an emergency or other situations who and where can the center contact?

Mother:_____ Phone:_____

Father:_____ Phone:_____

Relative:_____ Phone:_____

Other:_____ Phone:_____

23. We will be having Parent Education meetings and other activities for parents throughout the year. Which is the best time for you to attend?

MON.____ TUES. ____ WED.____ THURS. ____ FRI.____

What time is best for you?_____

Will you need transportation to attend center activities?_____

24. Would you like to do volunteer work for the center? Yes___ No___ At home____

At center_____. If yes, center staff will contact you if anything needs to be done.

25. Either Parent: Do you have a special skill that you can demonstrate for the children?_____

26. Would you like to learn how to do some specific learning activity with your child?

Yes_____ No____. If yes, where would you prefer to have a staff member(s) demonstrate the activities? In your home?_____ or at center?_____.

_____ _____
(Signature of Parent/Guardian) (Date)

_____ _____
(Signature of Interviewer) (Date)

PARENT CONTACT RECORD

CHILD:_____ PARENT:_____

DATE OF CONTACT:_____ PLACE OF CONTACT:_____

TEACHER INITIATED ☐ PARENT INITIATED ☐

OBJECTIVE FOR CONTACT:

INFORMATION SHARED WITH PARENT:

INFORMATION SHARED BY PARENT:

_____
TEACHER SIGNATURE

Parent Contact Chart

Child's Name	Dates of Parent Contact								
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
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9/07 S (Sample entry) Indicate location: S--school; H--home; O--other